

## Frequently Asked Questions: ACTIVATE I-Corps™

### **1. What is the relationship between ACTIVATE I-Corps and the regional NSF ICorps program?**

TTU ACTIVATE I-Corps™ is a 5-week workshop based on the Business Model Canvas that aligns with the methodologies and best practices of the regional NSF I-Corps programs. It's particularly well-suited for non-university teams or those working on technologies that may not meet the eligibility criteria for the national program.

### **2. How many times a year will the ACTIVATE I-Corps™ Program be offered?**

The ACTIVATE I-Corps™ program is offered twice a year, in the spring and fall. Please visit our website for upcoming program dates and application deadlines.

### **3. When can I submit my application for the ACTIVATE I-Corps™ Program? Is there a deadline?**

Applications for the program are accepted on a rolling basis, but please visit our website for upcoming program dates and application deadlines.

### **4. What is the schedule for the ACTIVATE I-Corps™ Program?**

The program consists of five sessions and an optional final check-in session:

- Session 1: Customer Discovery Best Practices, Customer Segments and Value Propositions
- Session 2: Channels and Customer Relationships
- Session 3: Revenue Streams and Cost Structure
- Session 4: Key Activities, Resources, and Partnerships
- Session 5: Final Presentations
- Optional Final Check-In Session: Completion of Additional 15 Interviews

### **5. What happens after I apply?**

Applications will be screened for eligibility for ZAP or ACTIVATE I-Corps™. After eligibility review, there are two post-eligibility steps:

- ZAP Program Selection: Teams meeting the ZAP criteria will receive guidance to prepare for the program with the goal of advancing to the National I-Corps.
- ACTIVATE I-Corps™ Program Selection: Teams fitting the ACTIVATE ICorps™ profile will be enrolled in the comprehensive training program offered by TTU. Successfully completing this program will pave the way for participants to

progress into other Innovation Hub programs such as the iLaunch Competition, Prototype Fund Award, or the TTU Accelerator Program.

#### **6. What is ZAP, and what kind of teams/projects does it support?**

ZAP is conducted by I-Corps™ Hub West and supports deep technology concepts originating from faculty research labs. Concepts should be original and, in an area of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) normally supported by the NSF but can include other disciplines or inventions from non-traditional pathways.

### **I-Corps Academic National Team Eligibility Criteria**

#### **Team Eligibility Criteria**

##### **Team Roles:**

Given that one of the goals of the National I-Corps program is to reach as many faculty and graduate students as possible, it is expected that the team structure supports this goal.

##### **a. Entrepreneurial Lead (EL) expectations:**

- A PhD student or Postdoc working with the technology and/or a co-inventor. They could have graduated from the university.
- In special cases, master's students who meet the other qualifications.
- Co-ELs are allowed only if they add value to the team.
- Repeat ELs are not allowed.

##### **b. Technical Lead (TL) expectations:**

- An ideal TL is a faculty member who is the inventor or co-inventor of the technology and PI for the I-Corps award.
- The TL is required to participate with the team.
- Repeat TLs must be working on a significantly different technology with a different team. A pivot in industry or application of the technology is not allowed.

##### **c. Industry Mentor (IM) expectations:**

- Ideally has translational knowledge and experience in the industry
- Has significant entrepreneurial experience.
- Does not have a financial interest in the team or technology.
- Adds value to the team.
- Is committed to supporting and participating in the sessions with the team.

d. PI of Record:

Adding PIs just to meet eligibility requirements is not encouraged: for example, a team consisting entirely of graduate students or a PI who has not been involved with the development of the technology and has no interest in its commercialization. The PI should have a connection to the team and the technology.

e. Additional Considerations

- Graduate students and postdocs can only participate once in I-Corps as ELs.
- TLs/Faculty Members can participate with a new technology, new team and must be at least one year from submission of final report on a previous I-Corps award.
- EL and TL must have completed a regional program with this technology within the past two years to be eligible.

f. Funding

\$50,000 is available to teams accepted into the national program. Funding can be used for EL/TL stipends and customer discovery-related expenses (i.e. travel to conferences to obtain interviews)

**Technology Eligibility Criteria**

- Must have been developed at the university associated with the team and the proposal.
- Must have been disclosed to the university technology transfer office (TTO) with notification of the response/outcome of the disclosure. Does the university TTO want to invest in this technology?
- IP must be protectable and defensible.
- Must be at an early stage of development or a technology prototype, and beyond the conceptual stage of development.
- Must be a “deep technology,” representing a significant breakthrough in science and engineering, not merely off-the-shelf or assembling technologies already available.
- The technology must go beyond an incremental improvement.
- Software solutions must identify a breakthrough in software technology beyond the application of new and emerging software tools that only require a development effort.
- Applications that apply ML and/or education technologies integrating AI are not considered deep technologies.
- The technology cannot be easily replicated.

For further details and inquiries about these programs, please reach out to Lena Zappia, Commercialization Program Director at [lena.zappia@ttu.edu](mailto:lena.zappia@ttu.edu).